Characters

- Mr˙ JONES: A light-brown-skinned man. Thirty years old. Hornrimmed glasses. Crewcut and small, smart mustache. He speaks in a clipped manner when in control of himself but is more than self-conscious, even from the beginning. Whatever, Mr˙ JONES speaks as unlike the popular conception of how a negro speaks as is possible. Not even the fallacious accent acquired by many "cultured" or highly educated negroes should be sought, but that general cross-fertilized dialect found on various Ivy League and the campuses of the University of California. He sports an ascot.
- Mr˙ CARPENTIER: A large, dark man in his late thirties. He speaks in blustering orations, many times mispronouncing words. His tone is stentorian, and his voice has an absurdly ridiculous affected accent.
- BILL: Twenty-two years old. Negro.
- SUE: Twenty years old. White.
- LENARD: Twenty-one. A fat white boy.

MISS MOSKOWITZ: Mid-thirties. An aging professional student.

MARTHA: An attractive negro woman.

Any number of interracial students to supply background, short of the point of discouraging a producer.

Act

Scene: A classroom of a Southern California junior college.

Modern decor. New facilities:

Light green blackboards, bright fluorescent lighting, elongated rectangular tables, seating four to eight students, facing each other, instead of the traditional rows of seats facing toward the instructor. The tables are staggered throughout the room and canted at angles impossible for the instructor to engage the eye of the student, unless the student turns toward him or the instructor leaves his small table and walks among the students.

It is seven o'clock by the wall-clock; twilight outside the windows indicates a fall evening. A NO SMOKING sign is beneath the clock, directly above the green black-boards, behind the instructor's table and rostrum.

The bell rings.

Half the STUDENTS are already present. MISS MOSKOWITZ drinks coffee from a paper cup; LENARD munches an apple, noisily. More STUDENTS enter from the rear and front doors to the room and take seats. There is the general low buzz of activity and first night anticipation of a new evening class.

BILL comes in the back door to the room; SUE enters the other. THEY casually look about them for seats and indifferently sit next to each other.

JONES enters puffing on his pipe and smoothing down his ascot.

The bell rings.

MR. RAY JONES

(Exhaling smoke)

Well . . . good evening . . . My name is Jones . . . ha ha . . . that won't be hard to remember, will it? I'll be your instructor this semester . . . ha ha . . . Now this is English 22E . . . Creative Writing.

LENARD

Did you say 22E?

MR. RAY JONES

Yes, I did . . . Do all of you have that number on your cards? . . . Now look at your little I˙B˙M˙ cards and see if there is a little 22E in the upper left hand corner. Do you see it?

(CARPENTIER *enters and looks over the class)*

MISS MOSKOWITZ

(Confused)

Why . . . I don't see any numbers on my card.

MR. RAY JONES

(Extinguishing pipe)

Good . . . now that everyone seems to belong here who is here, we can get started with our creativity . . . ha ha . . . If I sort of . . .

MISS MOSKOWITZ

(Protesting)

But I don't have a number!

LENARD

(Ridicule)

Yes, you do!

MISS MOSKOWITZ

Give that back to me . . . give that card back to me right now!

LENARD

(Pointing to card)

It's right here like he said . . . in the upper left-hand corner.

MISS MOSKOWITZ

(Snatching card)

I know where it is!

MR. RAY JONES

Now that we all know our . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

Sir . . . I just arrived in these surroundings and I have not yet been oriented as to the primary sequence of events which have preceded my entrance.

MR. RAY JONES

Well, nothing has . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

(Cutting)

If you will enlighten me I'll be eternally grateful for any communicative aid that you may render in your capacity as professor *de la classe*.

MR. RAY JONES

Well . . . well . . . I'm not a professor, I'm an instructor.

BILL

Just take a look at your card and see if. . .

MR. CARPENTIER

Didn't your mother teach you any manners, young man?

BILL

What did you say, fellah?

MR. CARPENTIER

Don't speak until you're asked to . . .

MR. RAY JONES

Now you people back there . . . pay attention.

MISS MOSKOWITZ

Why, I never in all my life . . .

MR. RAY JONES

Now to begin with . . .

SUE

You've got some nerve speaking to him like that. Where did you come from, mister?

MR. RAY JONES

Class!

MR. CARPENTIER

Where I came from . . . *mon bonne femme* . . . has no bearing on this situational conundrum . . . splendid word, conundrum, heh, what? Jimmie Baldwin uses it brilliantly on occasion . . .

MR. RAY JONES

I'm not going to repeat . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

But getting back to the matter at hand . . . I am here to become acquainted with the formal aspects of authorcraft . . . Of course I've been a successful writer for many years even though I haven't taken the time for the past ten years to practice the art-forms of fiction, drama or that very breath of the muse . . . poesy . . .

MR. RAY JONES

Sir . . . please!

BILL

How do you turn it off?

LENARD

For christ sake!

MR. CARPENTIER

But you can find my name footnoted in numerous professional sociological-psychological-psychiatric and psychedelic journals . . .

MR. RAY JONES

If you'll please . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

A˙ T˙ Carpentier is the name . . . notice the silent T . . . My profession gets in the way of art, in the strict aesthetic sense, you know . . . I'm a Sociological Data Research Analysis Technician Expert. Yes, penalology is my field, naturally, and I have been in over thirty-three penal institutions across the country . . . in a professional capacity, obviously . . . ha ho ho.

MR. RAY JONES

Sir!

LENARD

Geez!

MR. CARPENTIER

Here are some of my random findings, conclusions, etc˙ which I am re-creating into a new art-form . . .

SUE

A new art-form we have here already.

BILL

This is going to be one of those classes.

MR. CARPENTIER

Yes, young lady . . . Socio Drama . . .

MR. RAY JONES

All right, Mr˙ Carpenter.

MR. CARPENTIER

(Corrects)

Carpentier! The T is silent.

MR. RAY JONES

Okay. Complete what you were saying. . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

Thank you, sir.

MR. RAY JONES

. . . and then . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

By the way, my good friend J˙ J˙ Witherthorn is already

dickering with my agent for options on my finished draft for a pilot he is planning to shoot of *Only Corpses Beat the Big House* which, by the way, is the title of the first script, taken from an abortive *novella narratio* I had begun in my youth after a particularly torrid affair with one Eulah Mae Jackson . . .
MR. RAY JONES

Good . . . now let's . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

Of course, after I read it some of you will say it resembles in some ways *The Quare Fellow*, but I have documented evidence that I've had this plot outlined since . . .

BILL

Question!

SUE

Won't somebody do something?

BILL

Question!

MR. RAY JONES

(To BILL)

Yes, what is it?

MR. CARPENTIER

(Over)

. . . Of course I'll finish it on time . . . the final draft, I mean . . . and have it to J˙ J˙ far ahead of the deadline but I thought that the rough edges could be chopped off here . . . and there . . .

MR. RAY JONES

(Approaching anger)

Mr˙ Carpentier . . . if you'll please?

MR. CARPENTIER

(Belligerent and glaring)

I beg your pardon, sir?

(MARTHA *enters)*

MR. RAY JONES

This class must get under way . . . immediately!

MARTHA

(*To* Mr˙ JONES)

Is this English 22E?

MR. CARPENTIER

Why, yes, you are in the correct locale, *mon jeune fil.*

MR. RAY JONES

May I see your card, Miss?

MR. CARPENTIER

(*Mutters*)

Intrusion . . . non-equanimity . . .

MISS MOSKOWITZ

Are you speaking to me?

MR. RAY JONES

(*To* MARTHA)

I believe you're in the right class, miss.

MARTHA

Thank you.

MR. RAY JONES

(*Clears throat*)

Hummp . . . huump . . . well, we can get started now.

MR. CARPENTIER

I emphatically agree with you, sir. In fact . . .

MR. RAY JONES

(Cutting)

Like some of you, I imagine, this too is my first evening class . . . And I'd . . .

MISS MOSKOWITZ

(Beaming)

How nice!

LENARD

Oh . . . oh . . . we've got a green one.

MR. RAY JONES

Well . . . I guess the first thing is to take the roll. I haven't the official roll sheet yet, so . . . . . please print your names clearly on this sheet of paper and pass it around so you'll get credit for being here tonight.

BILL

Question!

MR. RAY JONES

Yes . . . you did have a question, didn't you?

BILL

Yeah . . . How will we be graded?

SUE

Oh . . . how square!

MR. RAY JONES

(Smiling)

I'm glad you asked that.

MISS MOSKOWITZ

So am I.

LENARD

You are?

MR. RAY JONES

Well . . . as of now everybody is worth an A˙ I see all students as A students until they prove otherwise . . .

MISS MOSKOWITZ

Oh, how nice.

MR. RAY JONES

But tonight I'd like us to talk about story ideas. Since this is a writing class we don't wish to waste too much of our time on matters other than writing. And it is my conclusion that a story isn't a story without a major inherent idea which gives it substance . . .

MISS MOSKOWITZ

How true.

MR. RAY JONES

And, by the way, that is how you are to retain your A's. By handing in all written assignments on time and doing the necessary outside work . . .

LENARD

Typewritten or in longhand, Mr˙ Jones?

MR. RAY JONES

I am not a critic, so you will not be graded on how well

you write but merely if you attempt to grow from the experience you have in this class . . . this class is not only to show you the fundamentals of fiction, drama and poetry but aid your productivity, or should I say creativity . . . ha ha . . .
MR. CARPENTIER

(Admonishing)

You might say from the standpoint of grammar that fundamentals are essential but . . .

MR. RAY JONES

(Piqued)

Mr˙ Carpentier . . . I don't understand what point you are making!

MR. CARPENTIER

(Belligerent)

Why . . . why . . . you can say that without the basics of grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc˙ . . . that these neophytes will be up the notorious creek without even the accommodation of a sieve.

SUE

Jesus!

LENARD

(Scowling)

Up the where, buddy?

MISS MOSKOWITZ

I don't think we should . . .

BILL

It's fantastic what you . . .

MARTHA

Is this really English 22E?

MR. RAY JONES

Now wait a minute, class. Since this is the first night, I want everyone to identify themselves before they speak. All of you know my name . . .

MARTHA

I don't, sir.

MR. CARPENTIER

You might say they will come to grief . . . artistic calamity.

MR. RAY JONES

Ohhh . . . It's Jones . . . Ray Jones.

LENARD

Didn't you just publish a novel, Mr˙ Jones?

MARTHA

Mine's Martha . . . Martha Butler.

MR. RAY JONES

Oh, yes . . . yes, a first novel.

MR. CARPENTIER

(Mutters)

Cultural lag's the real culprit!

BILL

(*To* SUE)

I'm Bill . . . Bill Cooper.

SUE

Pleased . . . just call me Sue. Susan Gold.

MR. RAY JONES

Now . . . where were we? . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

In the time of classicism there wasn't this rampant commerce among Philistines . . .

MR. RAY JONES

Does someone . . .

MISS MOSKOWITZ

Story ideas, Mr˙ Jones.

MR. RAY JONES

Oh, yes.

(Hands are raised. LENARD *is pointed out)*

LENARD

I have an idea for a play.

MR. RAY JONES

Your name, please.

LENARD

Lenard . . . Lenard Getz. I have an idea for a lavish stage spectacle using just one character.

MR. CARPENTIER

It won't work . . . it won't work!

SUE

How do you know?

MISS MOSKOWITZ

Let Lenard tell us, will ya?

MR. CARPENTIER

(Indignant)

Let him! Let him, you say!

MR. RAY JONES

(Annoyed)

Please, Mr˙ Carpentier . . . please be . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

(Glaring about the room)

But I didn't say it had to be done as parsimoniously as a Russian play. I mean only as beginners you people should delve into the simplicity of the varied techniques of the visual communicative media and processes.

MR. RAY JONES

For the last time . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

Now take for instance cinema . . . or a tele-drama . . . some of the integrative shots set the mood and that takes technique as well as craft.

MR. RAY JONES

I have my doubts about all that . . . but it doesn't have anything to do with Lenard's idea, as I see it.

MR. CARPENTIER

I don't agree with you, sir.

MR. RAY JONES

It's just as well that you don't. Lenard, will you go on, please?

LENARD

Ahhh . . . forget it.

MR. RAY JONES

But, Lenard, won't you tell us your idea?

LENARD

No!

MISS MOSKOWITZ

Oh . . . Lenard.

MR. CARPENTIER

There is a current theory about protein variation . . .

MR. RAY JONES

Not again!

SUE

(Cutting)

I have a story idea!

MISS MOSKOWITZ

Good!

MR. RAY JONES

Can we hear it . . . Miss . . . Miss . . .?

SUE

Miss Gold. Susan Gold.

MR. RAY JONES

Thank you.

SUE

Well, it's about a story that I have in my head. It ends with a girl or woman, standing or sitting alone and frightened. It's weird. I don't know where I got *that* theme from! . . . There is just something about one person, alone, that is moving to me. It's the same thing in movies or in photography. Don't you think if it's two or more persons, it loses a dramatic impact?

MR. RAY JONES

Why, yes, I do.

MISS MOSKOWITZ

It sounds so psychologically pregnant!

LENARD

It's my story of the stupendous one-character extravaganza!

(A few in the class hesitantly clap)

MR. CARPENTIER

(In a deep, pontifical voice)

Loneliness! Estrangement! Alienation! The young lady's story should prove an interesting phenomena — it is a phenomena that we observe daily.

MISS MOSKOWITZ

Yes, it is one of the most wonderful things I've ever heard.

MR. RAY JONES

(Irritated)

Well, now let's . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

The gist of that matter . . .

MR. RAY JONES

I will not have any more interruptions, man. Are you all there!

MR. CARPENTIER

I mean only to say that it is strictly in a class of phenomenology in the classic ontonological sense.

MR. RAY JONES

There are rules you must observe, Mr˙ Carpentier. Like our society, this school too has rules.

MR. CARPENTIER

Recidivism! Recidivism!

MARTHA

Re-sida-what?

MR. CARPENTIER

(Explaining)

Recidivism. A noted example of alienation in our society. We have tape-recorded AA meetings without the patients knowing that they were being recorded. In prison we pick up everything . . . from a con pacing his cell . . . down to the fights in the yard . . . and I can say that the milieu which creates loneliness is germane to the topic of recidivism.

MR. RAY JONES

What? . . . You're a wire-tapper, Mr˙ Carpentier?

MR. CARPENTIER

Any method that deters crime in our society is most inadequate, old boy.

BILL

A goddamned fink!

LENARD

I thought I smelled somethin'.

MR. CARPENTIER

Crime is a most repetitive theme these days. . . . The primacy purpose of we law enforcement agents is to help stamp it out whatever the method.

MR. RAY JONES

Carpentier!

MR. CARPENTIER

Let the courts worry about . . .

MR. RAY JONES

But, sir, speaking man to man, how do you feel about your job? Doesn't it make you uneasy knowing that your race, I mean, our people, the Negro, is the most victimized by the police in this country? And you are

using illegal and immoral methods to . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

Well, if you must personalize that's all right with me . . . but, really, I thought this was a class in creative writing, not criminology. I hesitate to say, Mr˙ Jones, that you are indeed out of your depth when you engage me on my own grounds . . . ha ha . . .

(Mr˙ JONES *has taken off his glasses and is looking at* Mr˙ CARPENTIER *strangely*.)

MARTHA

(Raising voice)

I have a story idea . . . it's about this great dark mass of dough . . .

BILL

Yeah . . . like a great rotten ham that strange rumbling and bubbling noises come out of . . .

SUE

And it stinks something awful!

LENARD

Like horseshit!

MISS MOSKOWITZ

Oh, my.

MR. RAY JONES

Class! Class!

MR. CARPENTIER

(Oblivious)

The new technology doesn't allow for the weak tyranny of human attitudes.

MR. RAY JONES

You are wrong, terribly wrong.

MR. CARPENTIER

This is the age of the new intellectual assisted by his tool, the machine, I'll have you know!

MR. RAY JONES

(Furious)

Carpentier! . . . That is what we are here in this classroom to fight against . . . we are here to discover, to

awaken, to search out human values through art!

MR. CARPENTIER

Nonsense! Nonsense! Pure nonsense! All you pseudoartistic types and humanists say the same things when confronted by truth.

(Prophetically)

This is an age of tele-symbology . . . phallic in nature, oral in appearance.

MR. RAY JONES

Wha' . . . I don't believe I follow you. Are you serious, man?

MR. CARPENTIER

I have had more experience with these things so I can say that the only function of cigarettes is to show the cigarette as a symbol of gratification for oral types . . .

Tobacco, matches, Zig Zag papers, etc˙ are all barter items in prison. There you will encounter a higher incident of oral and anal specimens. I admit it is a liberal interpretation, true, but I don't see how any other conclusion can be drawn!
MR. RAY JONES

You are utterly ineducable. I suggest you withdraw from this class, Mr˙ Carpentier.

MISS MOSKOWITZ

Oh, how terrible.

BILL

Hit the road, Jack.

MR. CARPENTIER

If I must call it to your attention . . . in a tax-supported institution . . . to whom does that institution belong?

LENARD

That won't save you, buddy.

MR. RAY JONES

Enough of this! Are there any more story ideas, class?

MR. CARPENTIER

(Mumbling)

It's councilmatic . . . yes, councilmatic . . .

MISS MOSKOWITZ

My name is Moskowitz and I'd like to try a children's story.

MR. CARPENTIER

Yes, yes, F˙ G˙ Peters once sold a story to the Howdie Dowdie people on an adaptation of the *Cherry Orchard* theme . . . and Jamie Judson, a good friend of mine . . .

MR. RAY JONES

Mr˙ Carpentier . . . please. Allow someone else a chance.

MR. CARPENTIER

Why, all they have to do is speak up, Mr˙ Jones.

MR. RAY JONES

Maybe so . . . but please let Mrs˙ Moskowitz . . .

MISS MOSKOWITZ

(Coyly)

That's Miss Moskowitz, Mr˙ Jones.

MR. RAY JONES

Oh, I'm sorry, Miss Moskowitz.

MISS MOSKOWITZ

That's okay, Mr˙ Jones . . . Now my story has an historical background.

MR. CARPENTIER

Which reminds me of a story I wrote which had a setting in colonial Boston . . .

LENARD

Not again. Not again, for chrissakes!

MR. CARPENTIER

Christopher Attucks was the major character . . .

SUE

Shhhhhh . . .

BILL

Shut up, fellow!

MR. CARPENTIER

(Ignoring them)

The whole thing was done in jest . . . the historical inaccuracies were most hilarious . . . ha ho ho . . .

MR. RAY JONES

Mr˙ Carpentier!!!

(Mr˙ CARPENTIER *grumbles and glowers)*

MISS MOSKOWITZ

Thank you, Mr˙ Jones.

MR. RAY JONES

That's quite all right . . . go on, please.

MISS MOSKOWITZ

Yes, now this brother and sister are out in a park and they get separated from their mother and meet a lion escaped from the zoo and make friends with him.

LENARD

And they live happily ever afterwards.

MISS MOSKOWITZ

Why, no, not at all, Lenard. The national guard comes to shoot the lion but the children hide him up a tree.

BILL

(To SUE)

I got the impression that it was a tall tale.

SUE

Not you too?

LENARD

I thought it had a historical background.

MARTHA

Can you convince children that they can easily make friends out of lions and then hide them up trees?

LENARD

I got that it's pretty clear what motivated the lion to climb the tree. If you had a hunting party after you wouldn't . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

(Cutting)

Unless you give the dear lady that liberty . . . you'll end up with merely thous and thees!

MR. RAY JONES

What?

MISS MOSKOWITZ

(Simpering)

Oh, thank you, Mr˙ Carpentier.

MR. CARPENTIER

(Beau Brummel)

Why, the pleasure is all mine, dear lady.

MR. RAY JONES

Enough of this! Enough of this!

MISS MOSKOWITZ

(Blushing)

Why, Mr˙ Carpentier . . . how you go on.

MR. CARPENTIER

Not at all, my dear Miss Moskowitz . . .

MISS MOSKOWITZ

Call me Madge.

MR. RAY JONES

(Sarcastic)

I'm sorry to interrupt this . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

A˙T˙ to you . . . A˙T˙ Booker Carpentier at your service.

MR. RAY JONES

. . . This is a college classroom . . . not a French boudoir.

MISS MOSKOWITZ

(To JONES)

Watch your mouth, young man! There's ladies present.

MARTHA

(To MOSKOWITZ)

Don't let that bother you, dearie.

LENARD

What kind of attitude must you establish with this type of story and do you create initial attitudes through mood?

MR. RAY JONES

(Confused)

I beg your pardon?

MR. CARPENTIER

(Answering)

Why, young man, almost from the beginning the central motif should plant the atmosphere of . . .

MR. RAY JONES

Thank you, Mr˙ Carpentier!

MR. CARPENTIER

But I wasn't . . .

BILL

(Cutting)

To what audience is it addressed?

SUE

Good for you!

MISS MOSKOWITZ

Why, young people, of course. In fact, for children.

MR. CARPENTIER

I hardly would think so!

MARTHA

Oh, what kinda stuff is this?

MISS MOSKOWITZ

Mr˙ Carpentier . . . I . . .

MR. RAY JONES

Well, at least you're talking about something vaguely dealing with writing. Go on, Mr˙ Carpentier, try and develop your . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

A question of intellectual levels is being probed here . . . The question is the adult or the child . . . hmm . . . *Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver's Travels, Alice in Wonderland, Animal Farm* can all be read by children, dear lady, but the works have added implication for the adult . . . in a word, they are potent!

MARTHA

You're talking about universality, man, not audience!

MR. CARPENTIER

Do you know the difference?

LENARD

(Challenges CARPENTIER)

What's the definition of audience?

MR. CARPENTIER

Of, course, I don't use myself as any type of criteria, but I don't see where that story would appeal to my sophisticated literary tastes, whereas . . .

MR. RAY JONES

Now you are quite off the point, Mr˙ Carpentier.

BILL

He thinks we should all write like the Marquis de Sade.

SUE

Yeah, bedtime tales for tykes by Sade.

MISS MOSKOWITZ

I think you're trying to place an imposition of the adult world on the child's.

MR. RAY JONES

The important thing is to write the story, class. To write the story!

MR. CARPENTIER

Well, I think that the story was not at all that emphatic . . . it didn't emote . . . it didn't elicite my . . .

MISS MOSKOWITZ

(Confused)

Why didn't it?

MR. CARPENTIER

I don't think the child would have the range of actual patterns for his peer group in this circumstantial instance.

MARTHA

What, man?

LENARD

I got the impression that the protagonists are exempliar.

MR. RAY JONES

Class, do you think this story line aids the writer in performing his functions? . . . The culture has values and the writer's duties are to . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

No, I don't think this story does it!

SUE

Why not?

MR. CARPENTIER

It is fallacious!

MISS MOSKOWITZ

But it's only a child's story, a fantasy, Mr˙ Carpentier!

MR. RAY JONES

Yes, a child's story . . . for children, man!

MR. CARPENTIER

But it doesn't ring true, dear lady. The only way one can get the naturalistic speech and peer group patterns and mores of children recorded accurately . . .

MR. RAY JONES

(begins a string of "Oh God's" rising in volume until Mr˙ CARPENTIER *finishes his speech)*

Oh God, Oh, God, *Oh, God, Oh, God*, OH, GOD!

MR. CARPENTIER

. . . is to scientifically eavesdrop on their peer group with electronic listening devices and get the actual evidence for any realistic fictionalizing one wishes to achieve.

MR. RAY JONES

(Scream)

NO!!!

MR. CARPENTIER

(Query)

No?

MR. RAY JONES

(In a tired voice)

Thomas Wolfe once said . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

(Ridicule)

Thomas Wolfe!

MR. RAY JONES

"I believe that we are lost here in America, but I believe we shall be found." . . . Mr˙ Carpentier . . . let's hope that we Black Americans can first find ourselves and perhaps be equal to the task . . . the burdensome and sometimes evil task, by the way . . . that being an American calls for in these days.

MR. CARPENTIER

Sir, I object!

MR. RAY JONES

Does not the writer have some type of obligation to remove some of the intellectual as well as political, moral and social tyranny that infects this culture? What does all the large words in creation serve you, my Black brother, if you are a complete whitewashed man?

MR. CARPENTIER

Sir, I am not black nor your brother . . . There is a school of thought that is diametrically opposed to you and your black chauvinism . . . You preach bigotry, black nationalism,

and fascism! . . . The idea . . . black brother . . . intellectual barbarism! . . . Your statements should be reported to the school board — as well as your permitting smoking in your classroom.

SUE

Shut up, you Uncle Tom bastard!

BILL

(Pulls her back)

That's for me to do, not you, lady!

MR. RAY JONES

Four hundred years. . . . Four hundred . . .

LENARD

We'll picket any attempt to have Mr˙ Jones removed!

MARTHA

(Disgust)

This is adult education?

MISS MOSKOWITZ

(To Mr˙ CARPENTIER)

I bet George Bernard Shaw would have some answers for you!

MR. CARPENTIER

Of course when examining G˙ B˙ Shaw you will discover he is advancing Fabian Socialism.

BILL

Who would picket a vacuum?

LENARD

Your levity escapes me.

SUE

Your what, junior?

MR. RAY JONES

Let's try and go on, class. If you'll . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

(To MISS MOSKOWITZ)

Your story just isn't professional, miss. It doesn't follow the Hitchcock formula . . . it just doesn't follow . . .

MISS MOSKOWITZ

Do you really think so?

MR. RAY JONES

Somehow, I do now believe that you are quite real, Mr˙ Carpentier.

LENARD

(To Mr˙ CARPENTIER)

Have you read *The Invisible Man?*

BILL

Are you kidding?

MR. CARPENTIER

Socio Drama will be the new breakthrough in the theatrical-literary community.

MR. RAY JONES

Oh, Lord . . . not again. This is madness.

MR. CARPENTIER

Combined with the social psychologist's case study, and the daily experiences of some habitant of a socio-economically depressed area, is the genius of the intellectual and artistic craftsman.

MR. RAY JONES

Madness!

MISS MOSKOWITZ

Socio Drama . . . how thrilling.

MR. RAY JONES

Don't listen to him, class . . . I'm the teacher, understand?

MR. CARPENTIER

Yes, yes . . . let me tell you a not quite unique but nevertheless interesting phenomenon . . .

MR. RAY JONES

Now we know that there is realism, and naturalism and surrealism . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

. . . an extremely interesting phenomenon . . . adolescent necrophilia!

MARTHA

Oh, shit!

MR. RAY JONES

I have a degree. . . . I've written a book. . . . Please don't listen . . .

MISS MOSKOWITZ

It sounds fascinating, Mr˙ Carpentier.

MR. CARPENTIER

Yes, tramps will freeze to death and kids, children, will punch holes in the corpses . . .

LENARD

Isn't that reaching rather far just to prove that truth is stranger than fiction?

SUE

I have a story about crud and filth and disease . . .

MR. RAY JONES

And stupidity and ignorance and vulgarity and despair . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

I go back to my original point . . . I go back to necrophilia!

BILL

And loneliness . . . and emptiness . . . and death.

MR. CARPENTIER

Cadavers! Cadavers! Yes, I come back to that! . . . Those findings could almost be case studies of true cases, they are so true in themselves, and that's where the real truth lies . . . Verily, social case histories of social psychologists . . .

MISS MOSKOWITZ

(Enraptured)

Never . . . never in all my experience has a class aroused such passionate response in my life!

LENARD

I don't believe it!

MR. RAY JONES

But I have read Faulkner in his entirety . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

These people in New York, Philadelpha, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco . . . and places like that . . .

MR. RAY JONES

I cut my teeth on Hemingway . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

. . . they just get drunk and die in the streets . . .

MR. RAY JONES

Leaves of Grass is my Bible . . . and Emily Dickinson . . .

MR. CARPENTIER

. . . and then they are prone to suffer adolescent and urchin necrophilia!

MR. RAY JONES

(Frustrated)

. . . Emily Dickinson has always been on my shelf beside *Mother Goose*.

MR. CARPENTIER

It's curiosity . . . not a sickness . . . curiosity!

MR. RAY JONES

I don't want much . . . just to learn the meaning of life.

MARTHA

Will you discover it here, Ray?

LENARD

But how can anybody be so sure?

MR. CARPENTIER

(Offhand)

We happen to own some mortuaries . . . my family, that is . . . and it is our experience that children will disarrange a corpse . . . and if we don't watch them closely . . .

MR. RAY JONES

Booker T˙ Washington walked barefooted to school! Think of that! Barefooted!

MR. CARPENTIER

Once as a case study in experimental methods I placed a microphone in a cadaver and gave some juvenile necrophilics unwitting access to my tramp.

(JONES *almost doubles over and clutches his stomach; his hands and feet twitch)*

MR. RAY JONES

I'd like to adjourn class early tonight . . . will everyone please go home?

MR. CARPENTIER

What I'm saying is this . . . with our present cybernetic generation it is psycho-politically relevant to engage our socio-philosophical existence on a quanitatum scale which is, of course, pertinent to the outer-motivated migration of our inner-oriented social compact. Yes! Yes, indeed, I might add. A most visionary prognosis, as it were, but . . . ha ho ho . . . but we pioneers must look over our bifocals, I always say . . . ha ha ha . . . giving me added insight to perceive the political exiguousness of our true concomitant predicament. True, preclinical preconsciousness gives indication that our trivialization is vulva, but, owing to the press of the press our avowed aims are maleficent! True! Yes, true! And we are becoming more so. In areas of negative seeming communications probing our error factors are quite negligible. . . . For instance . . . Senator Dodd getting a pension for someone who has gotten abducted and initiated at a Ku Klux meeting . . . well . . . It's poesy! . . . Monochromatic!

LENARD

What's our assignment for next week, Mr˙ Jones?

MISS MOSKOWITZ

I have something to show you, Mr˙ Jones.

MARTHA

Are you okay, Mr˙ Jones?

MR. RAY JONES

Ray . . . just Ray . . . okay?

SUE

Do you have office hours, Mr˙ Ray?

MR. RAY JONES

I just want everybody to go home now and think about what has happened tonight . . . and if you want to be writers after this then please don't come back to this class. I've just published an unsuccessful novel, as you know, and I thought I'd teach a while and finish my second one and eat a bit . . . But I think I'd rather not, eat well, that is, so you won't see me next week but if any of you'd like a good steady job I could recommend you . . .

MR. RAY JONES

Reading is the answer. It must be . . . cultivating the sensibilities . . . Plato. . . . Aristotle. . . . Homer. . . . Descartes. . . . And Jones . . . I've always wanted to carry the Jones banner high.

BILL

(To Sue)

Hey, I've got some pretty good grass that just came in from Mexico.

SUE

Yeah? You have, huh?

BILL

It's at my pad . . . would you like to stop by?

SUE

How far?

BILL

A couple of blocks.

SUE

Okay. It might be interesting.

MR. CARPENTIER

(To a student)

Ubiquitous! A form of reference which exposes . . .

(BILL *and* SUE *exit. Students begin filing out*. MARTHA *walks over to* Mr˙ JONES, *though the other students are gathered about* Mr˙ CARPENTIER)

MARTHA

You look tired, Ray.

MR. RAY JONES

Yeah . . . yeah . . . I've been reading a lot. The classics are consuming.

MARTHA

Yes, I've heard. Why don't we stop by my place and I'll fix drinks and you can relax . . .

MR. RAY JONES

Okay . . . okay . . . but my ulcer's bothering me . . . Mind if I drink milk?

MARTHA

It's not my stomach.

(She helps him off)

MR. CARPENTIER

Who's that French poet . . . Balu . . .

LENARD

Bouvier?

MR. CARPENTIER

. . . Bali . . . Blau? . . .

(MISS MOSKOWITZ *shows* Mr˙ CARPENTIER *a bound manuscript as he deposits his own in his briefcase)*

MISS MOSKOWITZ

Will you please look at my few labors of love when you find time, Mr˙ Carpentier?

(He shoves it in the case beside his own)

LENARD

(Gathering his books)

Mr˙ Carpentier?

MR. CARPENTIER

(Snapping clasps on his briefcase)

Yes, Lenard.

LENARD

(Pushing himself between CARPENTIER *and other students)*

What weight does language have on the contemporary prevalence to act in existential terms?

MR. CARPENTIER

(Leads them off)

When the writer first named the crow "Caw Caw" it was onomatopoeia in practice, of course . . . but too it became the Egyptian symbol of death.

LENARD

The crow.

(MISS MOSKOWITZ *giggles*.

They all exit crowing: "Caw caw caw caw caw . . .")

BLACKNESS